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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
NORFOLK, VIRGINIA
MONDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2002

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PRESS RELEASE

Paul J. McNulty, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, announced that William Myers Barnes, age 48, of Southern Shores, North Carolina, pled guilty in U.S. District Court in Norfolk today for carrying a loaded revolver into the boarding area of an American Airlines flight at Norfolk International Airport on July 9, 2002. The court took the plea under advisement and set sentencing for January 3, 2003. On the misdemeanor conviction, the defendant could be sentenced to three years probation, a fine of \$2000, and be ordered to forfeit the pistol he carried into the boarding area, as well as another pistol located in his car in the airport parking lot.

The federal charges arose out of a random check of carry-on luggage conducted at the boarding gate. Defendant Barnes admitted placing the pistol in his briefcase on a recent automobile trip and forgetting to remove it prior to entering the boarding area for his commercial flight. He also cooperated with the airport police in revealing that he had another pistol in his car parked in the airport parking lot. He was initially charged with violations of the Norfolk City Code for firearms on airport property and the Virginia Code for possession of a concealed weapon without a permit, but those charges will be dropped in favor of federal prosecution. Federal prosecutors considered his cooperation and the lack of aggravating circumstances in reaching the decision to accept a plea to the misdemeanor.

Barnes' case was investigated by the FBI, the Norfolk Airport Police, and the Federal Transportation Security Agency and prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney James A. Metcalfe.